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POLAND: Changes in Party Leadership

The changes in the Polish party leadership announced yesterday at the closing of the party congress strengthen first secretary Gierek and suggest a continuation of the main lines of present policy.

Prime Minister Jaroszewicz and party economics boss Olszowski were among those dropped from the leadership. The removal of Jaroszewicz means that he will soon step down as Prime Minister, perhaps even before the national elections in March. He probably will be replaced by Gierek's close party associate, Edward Babiuch, a change that may be followed by a wholesale cabinet reshuffle.

Gierek's increased domination of the party leadership is evident in the ouster of Olszowski, earlier regarded as a possible rival, and the promotion of many of Gierek's supporters. The transfer of Babiuch out of the party secretariat presumably in preparation for his government assignment, may leave Gierek at least temporarily without an established number-two man in the party hierarchy.

The changes, as well as the speeches available thus far from the congress, provide little promise of any shifts in economic policy. Proponents of economic reform are likely to be disappointed by the removal of Olszowski, who reputedly favors reform, and by the apparent selection of Babiuch, who has no economic background, as prime minister. The chances for some reform measures, however, have not vanished; one of the new party secretaries--a Gierek protege--evidently advocates some decentralization in decisionmaking.

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